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7th Annual Wisconsin Film Festival, Madison, March 31-April 3, 2005

FINAL REPORT *June 15, 2005*
Mary Carbine, Director, Wisconsin Film Festival

Summary

A public program of the UW-Madison Arts Institute, the Wisconsin Film Festival has become the state's premier film festival and one of the best-attended annual arts events in the community. This four-day festival showcases independent and world cinema—including documentaries, feature films, avant-garde cinema and shorts—that would otherwise not be seen in Madison. The Festival makes a unique contribution to University outreach and the cultural life of Madison.

The 2005 Wisconsin Film Festival (March 31-April 3) presented 151 films from 27 countries—from the United States to Argentina, Armenia, Bhutan, France, Mali, Mexico, Norway, Israel, South Korea, Turkey and Senegal—selected to give audiences the opportunity to better understand daily life and viewpoints from countries in the news. The Festival also supported regional filmmaking by presenting more than 60 projects by filmmakers with Wisconsin ties, Wisconsin student and youth filmmakers. Films presented included 43 narrative features, 25 documentary features, one animated feature, 25 experimental projects (short and long), and 54 shorts of various genres. Multimedia performances and installations pushed the boundaries of cinema as an art form and showcased work of University faculty members. More than 80 filmmakers, speakers and industry professionals and 50 student and youth filmmakers participated. Programming also included talks, panels, and coffeehouse discussions, designed to offer educational and professional development opportunities. Films and talks were presented in 117 programs over four days, in ten venues in downtown Madison and the University of Wisconsin campus area including the Orpheum Theatre, Bartell Theatre, Club Majestic, Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center, Overture Center for the Arts, Memorial Union, UW Cinematheque, Hillel at University of Wisconsin, the University Square Theatres and Steep & Brew. Ticket sales topped 24,000.

The Festival marked a number of "firsts" in 2005. The Festival expanded into new venues such as the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center and the Overture Center for the Arts. *Isthmus*, Madison's weekly newspaper, threw the Festival a highly successful Preview Party. With the support of Steep & Brew, audience members voted for the first-ever Audience Awards for Narrative and Documentary Features. Favorite Wisconsin films from past festivals were offered on Madison's Charter OnDemand and Milwaukee's Time Warner OnDemand. Madison's Central Business District provided free downtown trolley service to festival-goers.

The Festival offers audiences the opportunity to see and discuss films that would otherwise have limited, or no, exposure in Madison. Through panels, seminars, and discussions with visiting filmmakers and industry professionals, Festival audiences learn to be active viewers and to develop a media literacy that has impact beyond the four days of the Festival. The Festival contributes both to the educational opportunities for area youth and students and to life-long learning opportunities for community members.

With the support of almost 60 University, community and business sponsors, and some 150 volunteers, the Festival makes an important contribution to "town-gown" relations and to the local economy. Genyne Edwards, Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Tourism, has called the Festival "one of the cornerstones of Wisconsin's cultural attractions." Kim Straka of the Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau pointed to the Festival as one of the biggest events the organization promotes at this time of year. "It adds to our quality of life in Madison," she said. "People look forward to this event." It is estimated that Festival visitors spent more than $235,000 on lodging, food and beverages alone in downtown Madison over the four days of the Festival.

Although faced with a lean state and university budget environment and a highly competitive arts fundraising climate, the 2005 Festival ended the fiscal year in a position of financial strength. The number of sponsors increased 12%, and external cash sponsorship increased 19%. The Festival's cash operating budget was $187,000 (a 13% percent increase from 2004). With the value of in-kind donations factored in, the 2005 combined cash and in-kind operating budget for the Festival topped $634,000. By strategically limiting expenses and implementing a long-overdue increase in ticket prices (the first since 2001), the Festival ended the fiscal year with $25,000 carry-over revenues as seed money for the 2006 Festival.

Working with Media Relations partner Funnel, Inc., the Festival achieved increased media coverage in Wisconsin and beyond, with an estimated 21,562,000 print-online-broadcast circulation (more than double that of 2004), 44,162,000 gross impressions and advertising equivalency of $173,000. Coverage included mentions in *Forbes, USA Today*, a 4-day Festival report on *FilmThreat.com* (named as one of the top five movie web sites by the Wall Street Journal), and a profile of Festival Director Mary Carbine in the *Wisconsin State Journal.*

Comments and quotes from media and participants included:

- "Seven years after its founding, the Wisconsin Film Festival has become both a harbinger and highlight of the spring arts season."—Tom Laskin, *Isthmus.*
- "It's in my opinion one of the strongest regional film festivals."—Chris Gore (*Film Threat, The Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide*) as quoted in *The Capital Times.*
- "Unspooling a typically eclectic selection of foreign and independent features, documentaries, revivals, cult items and homegrown fare, the 2005 Wisconsin Film Festival continues to establish itself as one of the most important in the Midwest."—*The Onion* A/V Club.
- "The Wisconsin Film Festival is having a profound effect . . . not just on film-lovers, but on the local filmmaking scene."—Aaron Conklin, *Madison Magazine.*

- "So many fine documentary and regional movies (and moviemakers talking about them). . . . How can you beat it? You can't."—Jacob Stockinger, *The Capital Times.*

- "The Wisconsin Film Festival continues to thrive as an intense and energetic event."—Steven Snyder, *TimeOut, Southeastern Wisconsin's Weekly Entertainment Guide.*

- "If you're any kind of movie fan at all, you really do owe it to yourself to take part in this year's festival."—Rob Thomas, *The Capital Times.*

- "Best Festival" of "Top Live Shows" (2004).—Tom Alesia, *Wisconsin State Journal.*

- "My wife and I were both so impressed by the growing, huge success that the Festival has clearly become . . . everything about the Festival experience was really outstanding. . . . We plan on telling everyone we know—both potential audience members and filmmakers alike—that the Wisconsin Film Festival is an experience they shouldn't miss out on."—UW alumnus, filmmaker, entertainment attorney and Festival juror, Ian Rosenberg.

- "I just wanted to thank you for such a wonderful festival experience . . . . We feel your heart in everything you touch. From publicity to volunteers and tech support, you have created a wonderful festival."—Teri Lang, Producer, *The Real Dirt on Farmer John.*

2005 Programming:

The 2005 Festival kicked off and closed with films from legendary filmmakers—Samuel Fuller's magnum opus *The Big Red One* (Warner Brothers), fully reconstructed and presented by *Time* film critic and UW-Madison alumnus Richard Schickel, and *Moolaadé* (New Yorker Films) from African cinema's "founding father," Ousmane Sembene and winner, Un Certain Regard at Cannes. Chris Gore (*Film Threat, The Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide*) presented the Midwest premiere of his indie spoof *My Big Fat Independent Movie.*

Other highlights included "The Roof of the World"—films from the Himalayan region—including the Midwest premiere of François Prévost and Hugo Latulippe's *What Remains of Us* (7th Art Releasing), Werner Herzog's *Wheel of Time* and Khyentse Norbu's *Travellers & Magicians* (Zeitgeist Films). Documentaries included Ruth Leitman's *Lipstick and Dynamite* (Koch Lorber Films), Mark Wexler's *Tell Them Who You Are* (THINKFilm), Amanda Micheli's *Double Dare*, the U.S. premiere of Pola Rapaport's *Writer of O* (Zeitgeist Films), and Peter Raymont's *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* (California Newsreel), winner of the World Documentary Audience Award at Sundance, and the Israeli film *Channels of Rage*, presented in partnership with Hillel at University of Wisconsin.

World cinema standouts included Danish filmmaker Susanne Bier's *Brothers* (IFC Films), winner of the Sundance World Cinema Dramatic Audience Award; *Crónicas* (Mexico/Ecuador), Sebastián Cordero's powerful follow-up to *Ratas, Ratones, Rateros*, starring John Leguizamo; the searing Turkish-German love story *Head-On* (Strand Releasing), winner, Golden Bear and FIPRESCI Prize, Berlin International Film Festival; and the stylish Hungarian thriller, *Kontroll* (THINKFilm), winner, Prix de la Jeunesse, Cannes Film Festival. New films from Argentina included the docudrama *Whiskey Romeo Zulu*, about an airline pilot turned whistleblower and the Woody Allen-esque coming-of-age comedy, *Lost Embrace* (New Yorker Films, winner, Silver Bear, Berlin Film Festival). As one of fourteen Global Film Initiative partners nationwide,

the Festival hosted the Global Lens series of international films including the Algerian feature *Daughter of Keltoum*, and partnered with the UW-Madison Language Institute to offer youth outreach programs reaching more than 600 high school and college students.

Experimental and avant-garde offerings included a program of shorts and the feature *Certain Women* by fiercely independent filmmaker Peggy Ahwesh. Festival juror and School of the Art Institute of Chicago faculty member Chris Sullivan presented, for the first time, all four chapters of his new animated feature *Consuming Spirits*, excerpts of which were previously featured in the Whitney Biennial. Special performances included a 1928 silent Indian film, *Shiraz,* accompanied by original live music composed by a UW-Madison music student and performed on North Indian instruments. Multimedia performances included *Cosmic Code*, a music and interactive multimedia work presented in partnership with the Overture Center for the Arts, in which a 10-piece ensemble performed original contemporary chamber music, composed by UW-Madison faculty member Joseph Koykkar, to accompany a projected video mix. Artist and UW-Milwaukee professor of film Rob Danielson created the "Vilas Plaza Installation" during the Festival, an outdoor site-specific visual and sound installation.

For a complete list of films and talks, see the Festival Program or www.wifilmfest.org.

Wisconsin Filmmakers

The Wisconsin Film Festival continued support for Wisconsin's filmmakers with the annual "Wisconsin's Own" juried competition and showcase of films made in Wisconsin, or made elsewhere by current or former Wisconsinites, as well at the Student Filmmaker Competition featuring work from state universities. The winners of these juried competitions receive cash awards and/or film stock grants which they can apply to further filmmaking efforts.

The 2005 Wisconsin's Own competition was one of the widest yet, with a total of 65 films of varying lengths (including student and youth films). The feature-length films alone include Madison native Ben Wolfinsohn's (*Friends Forever*) semi-autobiographical High School Record, which premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival; *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*, a documentary from Taggart Siegel (Beloit College) which won the Documentary Audience Award at Slamdance as well as a special award bestowed by former Vice President Al Gore at the Nashville Film Festival; Marinette native Pete Schwaba's comedy *The Godfather of Green Bay*, which features Mark Borchardt and a score by The BoDeans; Milwaukee native Aaron Greer's *Getting' Grown*, which portrays a family's struggle to raise a child in urban Milwaukee; Madison native Sean Anders' *NBT: Never Been Thawed*, a satirical stab at subcultures from Christian rock to frozen entrée enthusiasts; Madison filmmaker Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau's *Side Effects*, an insider's tale of the world of "big pharma," and the documentary *Henry Aaron's Summer Up North*, by Milwaukee natives William Povletich and Josh Adams, which chronicles the legendary slugger's minor league summer in Eau Claire.

Other participating filmmakers with Wisconsin ties included UW-Madison alumnus and *Time* film critic Richard Schickel, who presented his reconstruction of *The Big Red One*, and Madison native Pola Rapaport, who presented the world premiere of her documentary *Writer of O*.

For a full list of "Wisconsin's Own" film offerings, see the Festival Program or see www.wifilmfest.org, "Series," then "Wisconsin's Own." A list of competition winners is attached.

UW Student Opportunities

The estimated student attendance at the Festival was 9,600, or 40% of overall ticket sales. Student attendance at Festival films was encouraged by many University co-sponsoring departments and faculty. In addition to the World Lens outreach program (below), the Festival offers a number of out-of-classroom learning opportunities for students as interns, filmmakers, and volunteers. Wisconsin Union Directorate Film Committee Festival Interns have significant responsibility for programming and managing Festival operations at the Memorial Union Play Circle. The Festival Assistant managed filmmaker submissions and correspondence. Two Box Office interns managed ticketing and customer service operations. Audience Award Coordinators managed balloting and tabulation for the Audience Award, and a UW-Madison statistics graduate student developed and analyzed the tabulation formula as a class project. More than 20 students show their films in the Festival each year, and at least 70 students served as dedicated Festival volunteers.

Outreach and Youth Programs

While the Festival is in its entirety a significant educational outreach program, of special note were two Festival programs involving Wisconsin youth, World Cinema Day and Youth Visions and Voices, and an outreach program for UW-Madison students, World Lens.

Working with the UW-Madison Language Institute, the Festival co-presented World Cinema Day, which brought quality international cinema and the expertise of UW Madison scholars to Wisconsin high school students and teachers to promote understanding of world cultures. World Lens offered a parallel educational experience for UW-Madison students. Both programs were presented in partnership with the New York-based Global Film Initiative, which presents the Global Lens film series of international films from the developing world and youth outreach programs to promote cross-cultural understanding. The UW-Madison was one of 14 regional partners nationwide—and the only Wisconsin site—chosen by the Global Film Initiative to host the Global Lens series and outreach programs.

On World Cinema Day, held during the Festival, more than 500 high school teachers and students from twelve Wisconsin schools participated in a screening of the award-winning Algerian film *Daughter of Keltoum* (Arabic and French with English subtitles), with the director and lead actress available for post-film discussion. UW-Madison professor Sally Magnan, Department of French and Italian and Director of the Language Institute, and graduate student Reem Hilal, African Languages and Literature, introduced the film. A specially developed discussion guide was made available to high school teachers to incorporate into their classes before and after this event.

On April 10, the UW-Madison community continued the celebration of cinema, language, and culture at World Lens, a campus-based outreach program for UW-Madison students featuring the award-winning Angolan film *Hollow City* (in Portuguese with English subtitles). Hollow City is also part of the Global Lens series and was screened for an audience of 100. Ellen Sapega, professor of Portuguese, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, introduced the film and led a post-screening discussion. World Cinema Day and World Lens were sponsored by the UW-Madison Language Institute, the Wisconsin Film Festival (a public program of the UW-Madison Arts Institute), the Brittingham Fund, the Evjue Foundation and UW-Madison Global Studies.

Another Festival program, "Youth Visions and Voices," presented films by Madison area elementary, middle and high school filmmakers and was curated by a University- and community-based committee of those involved in teaching filmmaking to youth from organizations such as the Office of Education Outreach in the UW School of Education, Fitchburg Access Community Television, LaFollette High School, Packers Community Center and WYOU Community Television.

Partners and Sponsors

The 2005 Festival earned the support of 57 University units and external businesses and organizations. Through its many partnerships, the Festival maintains a strong and positive University presence in the business community and among local government and cultural organizations.

The Festival enjoyed a 70% sponsorship renewal rate and added 14 new sponsors—including the Wisconsin Alumni Association, SupraNet Communications, and the University's Center for South Asia—a 12% increase in the number of sponsors overall.

Significant University partnerships and co-sponsorships included:

- Asian American Studies Program (Festival series: "Asian American Film: Beyond the Racial DMZ").
- African Studies Program, in support of African films.
- Center for South Asia (Festival series: "The Roof of the World: Films from the Himalayas").
- Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies, in support of general programming on Jewish history and culture.
- European Studies Alliance and Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia (CREECA) (Festival series, "Head On: European Cinema in Transition").
- Center for Interdisciplinary French Studies (Festival series, "Head On: European Cinema in Transition" and other French language programming).

External sponsors and partners included:

- A significant grant from the Evjue Foundation, utilized to support general programming as well as the Global Lens film series and World Cinema Day outreach program.
- Continued support from the Wisconsin Film Office (Wisconsin filmmaker showcase) and Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission.
- The Greater Madison Convention and Visitor's Bureau (included the Festival as part of their "Spring Getaway" visitor promotion) and Downtown Madison, Inc. (funding for downtown trolley services during the Festival).

- Sponsorships from community businesses and organizations such as University Research Park, Wisconsin Alumni Association, Steep & Brew, University Book Store, Willy Street Co-op, and the Madison Concourse Hotel, and regional / national companies such as the Independent Film Channel or Midwest Airlines.

- Significant in-kind donations of *pro bono* professional services by companies such as Clotho Advanced Media (website development), 40weight (creative services, marketing strategy); Funnel, Inc. (public relations); SupraNet Communications (hosting), IMS (consulting, e-commerce partner); *Isthmus* (production, layout, paid space); and Charter OnDemand and 105.5 Triple M (advertising and promotion).

Budget, Funding, Revenues

With the exception of the 90% FTE salary for the Festival director, the Festival is funded entirely through university and external grants, sponsorships and in-kind contributions. The Festival Director is primarily responsible for fundraising.

In 2005, the Festival was faced with a lean state and university budget environment, continued business concern over the economy and a highly competitive arts fundraising climate, due in part to the prominence of the Great Performance Campaign (in support of the Overture Center resident companies). Funding from University partners and sponsors dropped 29% from 2004 (from $38,790 to $27,451), owing primarily to a reduction in Anonymous Fund funding. At the same time, the Festival needed to increase capacity by adding venues, and increase spending on ticketing and customer service costs to meet increased audience demand.

Faced with reduced internal funding and rising costs, expenses were strategically limited, fundraising efforts increased, and a ticket price increase implemented (the first since 2001). The number of sponsors was increased from 2004 by 12% (from 50 to 57) and the amount of external cash sponsorship increased by 19% (from $57,998 to $68,645). Ticket package prices were increased, but single ticket prices remained the same ($7 general, $4 student), keeping overall admission extremely reasonable by both community and national festival standards. Box office gross revenues increased 33% from 2004, from $65,397 to $98,267.

In 2005, the combined cash and in-kind operating budget for the Festival was $634,000 (excluding FTE salary). Overall, the budget increased 13% from 2004. Ticket sales and merchandise revenues offset 15% of the total budget and constituted 42% of the Festival's cash budget of $187,200. Community business donations of cash and *pro bono* services—such as website development, hosting, marketing and creative services, public relations and advertising—comprised 79% of the total budget. University sponsors and partners contributed 4% to the overall budget (15% to the cash budget). Overall, the budget ratios for community business donations and state and county granting agencies remained stable from 2004, while revenues increased and University funding decreased.

The Festival ended the fiscal year with over $25,000 in carry-over revenues. See attachments for budget and funding details.

Visitor and Attendee Profile / Economic Impact

The Festival again partnered with the Greater Madison Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB), with the Festival featured as part of the GMCVB's "Spring Getaway" visitor promotion.

Based on advance ticket purchase records plus hotel room nights reported to the GMCVB , the Festival drew visitors from more than 82 cities outside of Dane County and 14 states outside Wisconsin. Overall, an estimated 96% of attendees were from Wisconsin, with appx. 76% from Madison and 87% from Dane County. 94% of Wisconsin attendees were from the South Central region, and 87% of Dane County attendees were from Madison. Within Madison, the largest percentage of advance ticket buyers (38%) were from the Downtown/Isthmus neighborhoods, with the majority of the rest evenly distributed among the South Central, Near East and Near West areas. About 40% of attendees were students at UW Madison or other institutions.

The distribution of Dane County, Madison and out-of-town audience member was similar to the past two years, with the exception of a 3% decline in out-of-town attendees, likely attributable to the lack of online ticket ordering. [Due to circumstances beyond the control of the Festival or its website partners, online ordering was not offered through the Box Office in 2005.]

It's estimated that 2005 Festival attendees spent almost $235,400 on lodging, food and beverages in downtown Madison over the four days of the Festival. This is a 15% decline from 2005 figures. In addition to the decline of out of town ticket buyers, many hotels reporting to the GMCVB were full from other events and unable to accommodate Festival attendees. When combined with operational direct spending, the four-day Festival generated an estimated $354,000 in local dollars for Madison and Wisconsin.

Scanned from the collections of the
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